DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 633 SP 035 073

AUTHOR Bezzina, Michael
TITLE Getting Together on the Pupil Free Day: A System Wide Response to Teachers' Professional Development Needs.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (Ballina, New South Wales, Australia, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Catholic Schools; *Curriculum Development; *Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Program Development; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS Australia (New South Wales)

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Parramatta in New South Wales (Australia) sponsored a large scale professional development program to help its secondary teachers deal with recent curriculum developments. Principals of the 24 diocesan secondary schools were allowed to choose whether their school would participate in the systemwide program, and all chose to do so. Teachers selected a pupil free staff development day to hold the large-scale professional development program. The program was designed to reinforce the notion of the Key Learning Area (KLA) as the basis for curriculum organization. Twelve different programs were conducted, for approximately, 1,250 teachers. Each program was planned and implemented by school-based personnel, with the Catholic Education Office providing general direction, necessary resources, and overall coordination. The program was characterized by two factors identified by M. Fullan as important in realizing curriculum change--a strong sense of determination to realize the KLA objectives, and well-developed support frameworks in the areas of curriculum and professional development. Evaluation by organizers, participants, and principals indicated that the professional development program was a success. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 367 633

GETTING TOGETHER ON THE PUPIL FREE DAY: A SYSTEM WIDE RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

A paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association Ballina, 1992

Michael Bezzina
Head of Division, Professional Development
Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Bezzina

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SB35023

GETTING TOGETHER ON THE PUPIL FREE DAY: A SYSTEM WIDE RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Michael Bezzina
Head of Division, Professional Development
Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta

The Background

No-one who has been even indirectly involved with education in NSW in recent years can fail to be aware of the massive curriculum change which has taken place in that time. Braithwaite (1991:1) takes the view that the "scale and scope of the changes exceeds many attempts at reform carried out in the NSW system in previous years and touches at every aspect of curriculum control and organisation".

For the secondary classroom practitioner the impact of sheer rate of change is compounded by the shift in educational philosophy, with an increasing emphasis on educational outcomes and the measurement and assessment tasks that are part and parcel of these. The challenge for them is to keep up with the changes, to somehow come to terms with them educationally, and to find the time and energy to put them into place in their classrooms. These tasks can be made all the more difficult by the isolation which has long been identified as part of the "territory" of classroom teaching (Lortie, 1975) and the intensification of teachers' work to which.Apple(1985) has drawn our attention in recent years.

In the face of such massive change there is little alternative but to resort, from time to time, to what Bradley (1991) calls the "Road to Damascus" model of professional development. That is, an approach to the provision of professional development which is driven by external change. This paper addresses the question of how an educational system - in this case the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Parramatta - can help its secondary teachers deal with recent developments in secondary curriculum through a system level professional development program.

Much of the focus of recent writing on teacher professional development has been on school based inservice training. While this is clearly, a superior way of addressing a great deal of the professional development agenda, there are circumstances in which a system-

based approach has much to recommend it. The current curriculum environment would seem to be one such instance.

Smalley (in McBride, 1989:27) identifies some of the advantages of system level approaches as being "access to a wider range of resources, both human and material" and "economies of scale in the management and delivery" of professional development activities. McBride (1989:41) adds to these the advantage of bringing a wider perspective to the identification of professional development needs, claiming that without this perspective, " institutions will focus down on their own needs and completely lose sight of wider issues".

The challenge to the system was to provide all of its secondary teachers with access to Board of Studies input on key issues such as curriculum outcomes and to reinforce the notion of the Key Learning Area as the basis for curriculum organisation. As well as these major objectives it was hoped that any system wide undertaking would help to overcome the isolation of classroom practice by allowing the sharing of experience; and serve to counteract the intensification of teachers' work by allowing time for reflection on current practice.

The option chosen was to give the Secondary schools of the Diocese (twenty four of them) the option of using one of their four approved pupil free staff development days on a common date, allowing the mounting of a large scale professional development program across the Diocese for all participating schools. In the final event, all Secondary schools chose to be part of the day. The common pupil free day was referred to as the *KLA Day*.

The Shape of the KLA Day

The common pupil free day has been used by a number of other Catholic systems in the past (Broken Bay, Lismore, Wollongong and the Eastern Region of Sydney), but none of these encompassed so many schools and teachers. The final registration numbers for the Parramatta KLA day were approximately 1250, which meant that the vast majority of teachers had been reached. . Twelve different programs were run on May 25th this year, encompassing Science; Maths; English; Creative Arts; Human Society and Its Environment (including Studies of Religion); Technology and Applied Studies; Personal Development, Health and Physical Education; Languages Other Than English; Senior Secondary Schools; Teacher Librarians; Library Clerical Assistants; and Laboratory Assistants.

Programs were offered at ten different venues spread across the Diocese. Each program was planned and implemented by school based personnel with the Office providing general direction, necessary resources and overall coordination. A copy of the program sent to each school is attached as Appendix A. (A number of changes were made in this before the actual day). All secondary teachers were registered through the Office at a particular venue and in particular workshop options prior to the day so that appropriate provision could be made for numbers.

Because of the significant nature of the day, it was possible to attract thirteen speakers and workshop leaders from the Board of Studies. As well, presenters were included from the Department of School Education, Examination Committees, tertiary institutions and the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta Catholic schools and private consultants. The scope of both subject matter and presenters in the program stimulated a great deal of interest even prior to the KLA Day. Approximately thirty businesses put on displays, particularly in the areas of publications and computer hardware and software.

Pressure and Support

Fullan (1987) speaks of the significance of simultaneous pressure and support in the realisation of curriculum change. There were in place in Parramatta CEO both a strong sense of determination to realise the objectives of the KLA Day (pressure) and well developed support frameworks in the areas of curriculum and professional development (suuport).

The critical element of the organisation of twelve different programs was having in place key curriculum support personnel who had been identified as experts in their KLA, who were able to assess the needs of teachers in that area and identify appropriate persons to respond to those needs. These persons were already in place in the system as either Key Learning Area Resource Officers (KLAROs) or network faciltators. The KLAROs are usually experienced Coordinators with one day's release per week from their normal school duties to function as a resource in a particular KLA across the Diocese. Network facilitators are volunteers who work with the smaller KLAs (like LOTE) or specific subjects or groups of teachers (like Home Science teachers or Teacher Librarians). Networks are groups of coordinators in a specific subject

which meet once a term for professional development and curriculum updates. A KLARO in an area like Creative Arts would work with three networks (Drama, Art and Music).

The existence of these networks and key people who work with them meant that there existed within the Diocese people with expertise in particular areas and with a ready channel for determining the needs of teachers. It would not be stretching a point to claim that these people were the single greatest ingredient in the eventual success of the day, taking on an active role in system level planning and in the organisation of the program at a particular venue.

In their role as venue organisers, KLAROs and network facilitators were responsible for negotiating the program, recruiting speakers and workshop leaders and the organisation of the activities at their venue on the KLA Day. They were supported and encouraged in particular by the Office based Secondary Curriculum Adviser who had established good relationships with each of them in the course of other duties. Blair and Lange (in Burke, Heideman and Heideman, 1990: 159) highlight the importance of involving participants in the delivery of centrally organised programs. A feature of the administration of the KLA Day was the ongoing involvement of KLAROs and network faciltators (all classroom practitioners) in the planning of the day through an organising committee.

In terms of a professional development support network, the Diocese has a strong commitment to the professional development of its teachers as manifest in the existence of a Professional Development Division, the provision of an extensive system based program of inservice, and the allocation of a great number of release days for individual school use in professional development. This clear commitment has become part of the culture of the Diocese, with an expectation that all schools develop their own professional development policy.

One specific ingredient which contributed to the support of the KLA Day is the system's existing practice of allowing four "pupil free days" per year for whole school professional development purposes. In a sense the KLA Day was simply a synchronisation of the use of one of these days. As well, there are in place highly developed administrative procedures for the professional development program in the Diocese. These are run by the Administrative Officer using a

computer data base which simplified the massive logistical task posed by the day.

Professional development and curriculum personnel in the Office worked very closely together in oversighting the program, liaising with the Board of Studies and other external providers, organising the financial side of the day, supporting individual venue organisers and liaising with Principals.

Clearly the KLA day could not have run without the support of the Principals in the Diocese. While initial consultations with principals in 1991 yielded mixed opinions on the merits of the day, the decision was made to go ahead with it, leaving individual Principals to decide on participation. For those who had already committed their four pupil free days prior to the decision being made, the Director of Schools provided an additional pupil free day if needed. A further incentive to participation was the shifting of most of the curriculum focussed professional development for 1992 program into the KLA Day. While this was necessary to avoid duplication and wasted resources, it meant that a school which chose not to participate would have limited access to this aspect of professional development. The quality of the advertised programs persuaded the few uncertain Principals, and all schools eventually partipated.

Evaluation Feedback

There were three major forms of evaluation feedback. The first was the response of venue organisers to the day gathered in informal conversations the same evening. The second was the written evaluations of participants. The third was a consultation with Principals about their perceptions, based on observation and/or feedback from staff.

Venue organisers were generally pleased with the day. A number expressed satisfaction with what they themselves had learned in the process of "pulling it off". Administratively the day had gone smoothly at every centre, much to the relief of organisers.

At a meeting with principals after the day, they indicated support for the day, with critical comments being limited largely to specific elements of individual programs. One major concern was the "human cost" in terms of demands on venue organisers, particularly of the

bigger programs (over 200 teachers and multiple options). In terms of the future of such days, Principals expressed legitimate concerns regarding the impact of a set day each year on their ability to apply their pupil free days to school priorities as they see fit.

Teachers' evaluations were collected on a form of the type attached as Appendix B. The mean ratings across programs on a scale from 1(very poor) to 5(very good) were as follows:

Content:	4.0
Methods:	3.9
Organisation:	4.3
Materials:	4.0
Program as a whole:	4.0

Verbal feedback varied from program to program, and among workshops within programs, but there were some recurring themes among the generally positive responses.

With regard to *content* teachers valued practical material above input on Board priorities. While there was a fairly strident group criticising this input, there were also many expressions of gratitude for the opportunity to hear it. The preference for the practical is in line with the findings of a recent study on professional development by the Queensland Department of Education (Department of employment Education and Training, 1991:vii). However, in the context of the primary objective of exposing teachers to the Board priorities, it would be hard to avoid the inclusion of this material. This is clearly an instance where system priorities and individual expressed needs and preferences are not in harmony, and the system has to address its own agenda.

Workshops and opportunities to share were the *methods* which received most favourable comments.

The *organisation* of the day was praised highly. The professionalism of the administration was noted. Participants valued the ability to choose workshops, but would have liked more information on each option to inform their choices before the day. There was a sense that perhaps there was an attempt to squeeze too much into the day, with a request by a significant number for longer workshops.

Comments on *materials* indicated that teachers would have preferred more "handouts" to take away with them. The resource displays were favourably received.

Overall such days were seen as being of value, and in particular the opportunity to take time out and share with colleagues from other schools. There were many requests that such days be run again, with some individuals asking for more than one per year.

Conclusions

The first Parramatta CEO Secondary KLA Day was successful in meeting its objectives. As a system, we can be well assured that all secondary teachers have been exposed to current Board of Studies thinking in the KLAs, and that the majority of them have had the notion of KLAs reinforced by the experience. Teachers commented favourably on the opportunity to share with colleagues away from the pressures of the daily routine as one of the highlights of the day.

The experience of the Parramatta KLA Day highlights two major factors contributing to successful large-scale system level professional development.

The first factor is the importance of existing, well supported practitioner networks, and key personnel in those networks who can identify and respond to need. The meaningful involvement of the skilled practitioner is crucial.

The second factor is the significance of the "centre" in providing political will, additional expertise in curriculum and professional development and a strong coordinating and administrative framework.

Within both of these factors, Fullan's (1987) notions of support and pressure can be seen operating. Enthusiasm and determination provide the "pressure", and personnel, physical resources and relationships provide the support. Getting the right balance seems to be the key to success.

Bibliography

Apple, M. (1985) *Education and Power*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bradley, H. (1991) *Staff Development* New York: Falmer Press

Braithwaite, R.J. (1991) *Commentary: Through a glass darkly - Curriculum Control in NSW Schools*. Unpublished manuscript.

Burke, P., Heideman, R. and Heideman, C. (Eds) (1990) *Programming for Staff Development: Fanning the Flame*. New York: Falmer Press.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1991) *The Provision of Teacher Professional Development in a Devolving Educatio System*.

Fullan, M. (1987) *Keynote address to the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Annual Conference*.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological Study*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

McBride, R. (Ed) (1989) *The Inservice training of Teachers*. New York: Falmer Press.